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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001605

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2014
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: PROTESTS PLANNED IN SEOUL AND PYONGTAEK OVER USFK
EXPANSION

REF: SEOUL 01518

Classified By: A/POL Sung Y. Kim. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (U) The Pan-national Committee to Deter the Expansion of U.S. Bases, a coalition of 138 leftist civic groups, plans to hold mass rallies in Seoul and Pyongtaek over the weekend to protest USFK's expansion in Pyongtaek and last week's removal of anti-USFK activists (reftel). Approximately 10,000 demonstrators are expected to converge on Daechuri Village, the area designated for the expansion of Camp Humphreys. Another 10,000 activists are expected to stage a demonstration in Seoul. Currently 8,000 riot police are stationed in the Pyongtaek area to deter protestors from entering the expansion site, and the ROKG plans to deploy additional 18,000 riot police in Seoul and Pyongtaek over the weekend in anticipation of the planned rallies on Sunday. Embassy has issued a warden message to U.S. citizens and a security notice for the Embassy community advising caution during the protests.

¶2. (C) According to MND and MOFAT interlocutors, the possibility of violence is high. The organizers of the planned rallies include extreme, anti-U.S. groups such as the radical student association Hanchongryon. ROK officials are worried that the protestors will try to provoke the riot police, who showed remarkable restraint last week, into taking a more assertive approach this time. In an effort to avoid violent clashes, the Prime Minister went live on national TV this morning to express concerns about the planned protests. PM Han Myong-sook explained that the expansion in Pyongtaek was related to Yongsan Garrison relocation, which would result in the return of valuable land in central Seoul to the Korean people, and emphasized the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance on Korea's security and economic development. Noting that Pyongtaek was carefully chosen based on important strategic and economic considerations, Han asked for the public's understanding and cooperation and urged restraint on the part of the protestors. In an indication that the law enforcement authorities will prosecute violent protestors, the prosecutor's office requested arrest warrants to formally charge 60 anti-U.S. activists from last week's operation. However, the Suwon District Court has formally granted a limited number arrest warrants and only 10 of the 630 activists arrested last week are still in detention.

¶3. (U) Public reaction to the removal of demonstrators last week has been relatively subdued, and recent surveys indicate that a large majority of Koreans oppose violent protests against the base expansion. According to a public opinion poll taken by the Office of the Prime Minister, while 49.3

percent of the respondents approve of peaceful demonstrations, overwhelming number of respondents (81.4 percent) disapprove of the use of violence to protest the expansion. In a separate development, some 300 pro-alliance civic groups plan to hold a rally next week in Pyongtaek to show their support the base relocation plan.

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